Waves of Settlement 1901-2001

The First Wave
Getting Going
1901 ~ 1939

Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum
7 April - 16 June 2001

ADMISSION FREE

Cnr. Goondoon and Bramston Streets, Gladstone QLD 4680.
Phone: 07 4976 6766 Fax: 07 4972 9097 Email: gragm@gladstonerc.qld.gov.au
Online: www.gladstonerc.qld.gov.au/gallerymuseum
Open: Monday to Saturday 10am - 5pm
Public holidays as advertised

An Initiative of the **Queensland Government**

1901-2001

GLADSTONE REGIONAL **art gallery museum**

Waves of Settlement ~
Gladstone, 1901-1939
From Federation to War in The Pacific

In the year of Australia's Federation, Gladstone was a small country town on a glorious seafront, described as 'one of the finest natural harbours in Australia' (Pugh's Almanac 1907).

The 1901 census shows the Calliope/ Gladstone district as having 3,007 people (1,791 men and 1,216 women - a much better gender balance than many places). Pugh's Almanac gives Gladstone itself 1022 people.
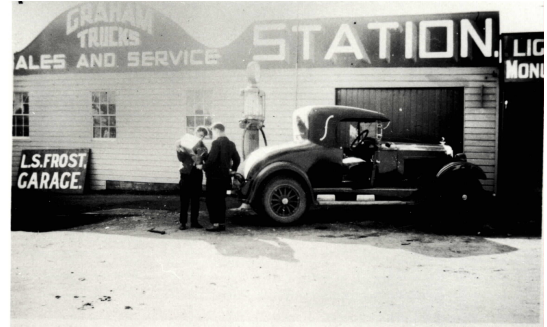
The town seems to have been a thriving commercial and administrative centre. The Post Office Directory 1901 lists:

- five hotels, four churches (the Church of England, the Roman Catholic, a
- Presbyterian church, a Salvation
- Barracks, and three lodges (Masonic, Hibernian and Oddfellows).

Goondoon Street 1910
Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection

- one bank (Commercial Bank of Sydney), and two newspapers (The Observer and The Advocate).
- a State School with 110 pupils, and one run by the Sisters of Mercy (with 150 pupils when it opened in 1900, which became Our Lady, Star of the Sea in 1902).
- at least one doctor and one architect, a barrister and a couple of lawyers,

Local Dentist, Hector McCray stops for fuel at
L.S Frost's Garage, Mount Larcom, 1926
Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection

numerous tradesmen and businesses, including several saw mills and a manufacturer of aerated water.

- a public hospital, a School of Arts, a Chamber of Commerce, a manganese mine, and of course, the Gladstone Meat works.
- sixteen women are listed by name (several on stations, a couple of midwives and dressmakers, a hospital matron, several boarding houses keepers, and one connected with a hotel).

There were clubs for tennis, football, and racing, two for cricketers, a billiard saloon and a gun club.

There is an odd reference to a Gladstone Sea Water Bathing Coy, which seems to indicate a swimming pool, opened on February 1, 1876, John Rhodes was the lessee.

Cultural activity seems to have been limited to a musical and dramatic club.

Administratively the town was run by the Municipal Council and there was a police magistrate and three policemen, a clerk of petty sessions, shipping magistrate and gold warden.

Travelling by horse and cart was a way of life
Boyne Valley Historical Society collection

The hospital had a surgeon, a dispenser and a matron, The Officer in charge of Posts and Telegraphs had two assistants, a line repairer and a messenger.

The town was connected with its hinterland by a series of (mostly bad) roads - land transport was usually by horse or horse-drawn vehicle and there were several bus and coach services.

Many Peaks (which in 1910 census had 1280 people), Calliope, Mount Larcom, Boyne Island and other small communities battled with the central administration to make their voices heard.
At times they were so frustrated that good will and communication were almost at an end.

Residents of Calliope went so far as to refuse to make the journey to attend Federation festivities in Gladstone. The matter of roads and, more importantly, bridges, remained vexed questions well into the century.

With the outside world the community was linked by regular shipping and rail services, and by telegraph. The hinterland communication was by Morse code until telephones were slowly installed after 1910.

In the forty years after Federation there were two great external forces which intruded on all Australian lives.

Gladstone naturally contributed its share of energy and lives to the Great War (as testified by the Anzac Memorial), and

suffered during the Great Depression - both these external forces dominated the 20's and 30's and meant that population figures declined slightly.

There were however, changes over which the community did have a measure of control.

In 1911 electricity came, with the lighting of the Meat works jetty, and by 1916 town supply commenced under a franchise agreement.

Roads only slowly improved, and not until 1929 was there any bitumen (Goondoon and Auckland Streets).

In 1914 the Harbour Board was formed to be restructured in 1926 to represent Gladstone, Calliope and Miriam Vale communities.
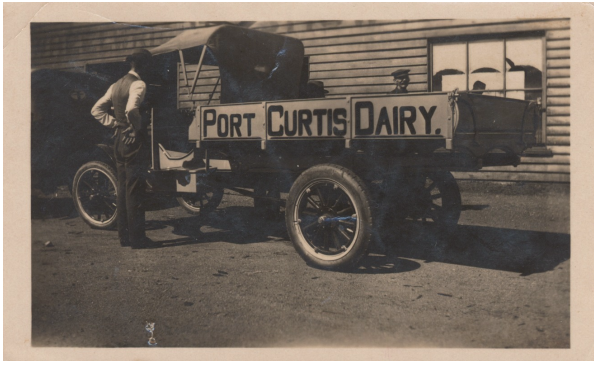

Local residents on yacht bound for South End, Curtis Island.
Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum collection

Meat, obviously, and horses, coal, cotton, and wool regularly passed through the port, but attempts throughout the 20s to have a naval base established proved frustrating and futile.

In 1926 the Gladstone Butter Factory became the Port Curtis Dairy Association and its first shipment of butter went over-seas.

The company continued to expand, joining the Mount Larcom & District Co-operative Dairy and Produce Co, and to be innovative; in 1930 it expanded again.

Port Curtis Dairy truck
Source: Joy Frewin Lord

That year also the Gladstone Hospital Board replaced a committee system and services improved slowly in a hospital with a most spectacular view - a new main building was opened in 1934.

In 1920 the CWA built a holiday house on Barney Point, and in 1936 opened their own rooms in town.

The first open air theatre was opened in 1922, and in 1927 the QATB and Fire Brigade moved into purpose-built accommodation in Goondoon Street.
The following year the British Imperial Oil Company occupied premises at Auckland Point.

The mainstay of the area, the Gladstone Meat works, weathered the vicissitudes of the 20's and 30's and was not unexpectedly sold - to an American firm, Swifts, in 1934.

That company was partly attracted by the facility of loading chilled meat directly from freezer to ship and in the next few years capacity of the works and the number of people it employed doubled in size.

Throughout this period the railway line and port facilities began to develop at the expense of the foreshore, but without any great protests from the community - in 1938 the Harbour Board moved into accommodation on reclaimed land on the foreshore.

The Town Hall (now the Art Gallery/ Museum), a post-primary section to the State School was built in 1934 and in 1936 a salt-water swimming pool was added to this list of amenities.

In the forty years after Federation the most noticeable incursion of new settlers were the Soldier Settlers who came to the Boyne Valley after the war. Fifty-four families, with little or no farming experience attempted to farm very small areas. Before long most of them moved to more lucrative and certain incomes elsewhere.

Numbers had not changed much by 1939 (3018 in the 1933 census), though the profile of people in the district had changed considerably.

There were still two newspapers though The Advocate had been replaced by the Daily Times. The Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the Bank of New South Wales and the Queensland Bank all had branches in town; and there were two private hospitals and a chemist.

Jack Walker with his Ford V8, 1937
Source: Jack Walker

Shops were numerous, and seem to have been larger. Friends store was well established, serving a much greater clientele than the town and there was a Cash & Carry, several butchers, bakers and car dealers.

In a sign of real maturity in the town, the Post Office Directory lists a 'French Beauty Saloon' (though for 1939 it mentions only nine women by name).

In short, everything was in place for the town to deal with the next wave, a population increase that was occasioned by the Second World War.